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Boudreau, Paul E

To: Burger, David
Subject: RE: WashPost 12/9/05 E.Robinson column on Secretary's Trip, Detainee Issues

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From: Orlansky, Michael D
Sent: Friday, December 09, 2005 9:59 AM
To: Milovanovic, Gillian A; Wohlers, Paul; Hubler, Stephen A
Subject: WashPost 12/9/05 E.Robinson column on Secretary's Trip, Detainee Issues

The characterization of the person who said he decided to go "vacationing in Macedonia" on New Year's Eve two years ago appears again in this column by Gene Robinson.

Mike

Many Words, Little Clarity From Rice

Friday, December 9, 2005; A31
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Washington Post
By Eugene Robinson

I've been trying my best to follow the "clarifications" on kidnapping and torture that Condoleezza Rice has been offering to our European allies, and there seems to be only one clear message: Shut up and don't ask too many questions.

When Rice was in Kiev, Ukraine, the other day, I thought I heard her say that the United States government has never tortured people we suspect of being terrorists - How could anyone even think such a thing? - or maybe she said that, in any event, we promise to stop doing this awful thing we've never done.

The secretary of state pledged that we wouldn't inflict "cruel and inhumane and degrading treatment" on anyone, even foreign nationals on foreign soil. But was she doing to the words "cruel, inhumane and degrading" what Bill Clinton did to the word "is"? And did this new policy apply not only to U.S. personnel but also to civilian contractors working for the military or the CIA? Just as I was starting to get lost in the tall weeds of the U.N. Convention Against Torture, the White House helpfully explained that Rice's comments didn't represent a change of policy at all.

Glad we cleared that up.

Earlier in her trip I'm sure I heard Rice say that we would continue abducting terrorist suspects and making them vanish into months or years of secret detention. She didn't want to talk much about those clandestine "black site" CIA prisons in Eastern Europe, which of course don't exist, depending on what the meaning of the word "exist" is. I'm pretty sure I heard her say we still reserve the right to hold people in these nonexistent prisons as long as we want, without charges or due process. I guess if she told us anything more about the nonexistent prisons, she'd have to kill us.

I'm certain I heard from Rice's lips a not-so-veiled threat to any European governments that might be inclined to play holier-than-thou on the issue of these "extraordinary renditions," which normal people would call

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"kidnappings." (Remember when "extraordinary rendition" meant nothing more sinister than what Jimi Hendrix did to "The Star-Spangled Banner" at Woodstock?) "Some governments choose to cooperate with the United States in intelligence, law enforcement or military matters," she said as she embarked on her trip. "It is up to those governments and their citizens to decide if they wish to work with us to prevent terrorist attacks against their own country or other countries, and decide how much sensitive information they can make public. They have a sovereign right to make that choice."

In other words, all you sanctimonious Eurocrats, it's your choice: Keep your mouths shut about the kidnappings and the secret CIA prisons, or else one day you might find yourselves in a dark alley on the bad side of town and maybe the cavalry won't arrive in time. Tony Soprano couldn't have said it better.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel believed she had heard Rice admit that the United States made a "mistake" when it sent one of the CIA's ninja-style squads to kidnap Khaled Masri, a German citizen whose only crime was that his name sounds like that of some suspected terrorist. Rice's people say Merkel misunderstood; Rice merely acknowledged that unspecified mistakes might have been made.

Masri says he was vacationing in Macedonia on New Year's Eve 2003 when local authorities arrested him and handed him over to the Americans. Five months later, long after it was clear this was a case of mistaken identity, he was released on a lonely hill in Albania.

We know the details of Masri's case, or at least his version of events, because earlier this week he filed suit in U.S. District Court in Alexandria against the CIA, former director George Tenet, the operators of the CIA-front air transport firm that flew him from Macedonia to a prison in Afghanistan, and the "John Doe" ninjas who kidnapped him.

Here is the lawsuit's account of the moment when, after Masri had been stripped naked, the CIA - representing you and me and our great nation - took him into custody:

"[He] saw seven or eight men dressed in black and wearing black ski masks. One of the men placed him in a diaper. . . . Mr. El-Masri was marched to a waiting plane, with the shackles cutting into his ankles. Once inside, he was thrown to the floor face down and his legs and arms were spread-eagled and secured to the sides of the plane. He felt an injection in his shoulder, and became lightheaded. He felt a second injection that rendered him nearly unconscious."

I'm still puzzling over Rice's words. Masri's, though, are quite clear.

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